

THE LEISURE HOUR

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"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—Cooper.



A BROWN STUDY INTERRUPTED.

THE CLACKITTS OF INGLEBROOK HALL.

BY MRS. PROSSER.

CHAPTER IX.—THE DINNER PARTY.

"DEARY me!" said Mrs. Clackitt, "if we was to have to go to that Manor House often, I should wish myself back in business. What a life Rosybeller has led us this last two hours!"

"What about, my dear mother?" said Priscilla, who came in rather tired from her usual round of the village.

"About that foolish gown, eh—Priscilla; what ailed the blue ones, or your Cheny crapes, that you could not wear them?"

"Dearest mother, I don't know; I think it makes very little difference what we wear—to us; and none at all, I am sure, to the people we are to visit."

"Just what I said, Priss; but Rosy would have her way, and now it has turned out as I looked for it—the gowns isn't come, and now past four, and you are to be there at six."

"Well, we must wear others."

"Oh, Rosy's just frantic. She won't hear a word of reason. There's hardly a servant left in the house; she has sent 'em all off, one after another, to see if them things are coming; and how she do storm! Deary me, she's fretting the life out of her! and out of me, too," said the old lady, with a sigh. "Go to her, Priss, perhaps you'll cool her."

Not with any reasonable hope of succeeding in her efforts did Priscilla depart to her sister's room.

"That odious woman," said the other directly she saw her, "has deceived me. I'll *never* trust her again. When I told her it was of such importance! What *shall* we do?"

"Wear something else, of course," said Priscilla, with a coolness that provoked Rosabella beyond endurance.

"Oh, yes! *Of course* it doesn't matter to you what we look like! I really believe the more plebeian we are, the better you are pleased. I wish I had some one who felt with me in these things," she continued, almost crying with passion.

"It is better not, just now," said Priscilla. "It is enough for one at a time to be so terribly unhappy about nothing."

"Nothing! *of course*, nothing: no, it's nothing to have all one's plans put out, and to be kept waiting, and be disappointed after all! Nothing! And, I dare say, you and mamma have been pitying Miss Gimp, and saying, 'it's of no consequence.' I despise such mean-spirited nonsense; and it's very undutiful of you, when you know papa wishes us to look as well as we can."

"Rosabella, you really surprise me. I can hardly believe you are making all this fuss about a gown, when your wardrobe is full. I think you want pity more than Miss Gimp. I should be quite ashamed to let Rachel know that I was so heart-sick for a dress, or that I cared so much for my effect on the Walthams."

What answer Priscilla would have had, and whether the pincushion might not have been sent at her head to enforce it, I cannot say, if Miss Clackitt's maid, Rachel, had not run in breathless, announcing that John had met the dresses a mile from Allport, and had brought them; and that they were being unpacked in her mistress's room. "Oh, miss, they were worth waiting for," said Rachel—"they are perfect pictures!"

"There's not a moment to lose," said Rosabella. "Rachel, I must have you. Pinner and Jane can attend to mamma, and my aunt and sister. Come. How lucky my hair was dressed! It's past five. The gown fits beautifully," she added (holding her breath, and pressing in her waist, while Rachel tried to make the back meet).

"Can you draw in your stays a little tighter, miss?" said Rachel, after several efforts; "this is quite impossible to get together."

"Oh, yes," said Rosabella, who began to contract herself to the smallest dimensions she was capable of. "Now, Rachel, try!"

"Yes, miss. Really, miss, it'll *bust*; it will, indeed, if I do it."

"Nonsense, Rachel! I told her the exact measure, and I'm sure it's right; your hand is awkward; fetch Pinner."

And Pinner came, and tried; but she gave a solemn, decided shake of the head, and said, without any more ado, "It'll bust, miss."

"What awkward things you are!" cried the in-

censed Rosabella—"call Jane;" and first giving herself a fresh screw till her face grew crimson, and holding her breath almost to suffocation, she committed herself to Jane.

"I done it, miss!" said Jane, whose smaller hand had more room to exert its strength, or who showed greater expertness.

"That's a good girl, Jane; it fits beautifully; it's not at all tight," said Rosabella, looking at herself with extreme satisfaction. "Now, my bouquet! There—I'm ready. Where is Priscilla, and ma, and aunt—are they ready?"

Yes, all were ready—and the carriage was ready—and Mr. Clackitt was ready—and that was saying a great deal; for, though he had had no new dress to occupy his time and attention, he, too, had been busy at the work of preparation. "What shall I talk about?" he thought to himself, as he sat that morning in his chair.

Now, be it known that though Mr. Clackitt did not read, he had a library: inasmuch as he thought that as necessary to a complete establishment as a dolphin fountain or a greenhouse. So to his library he went.

"They will be all military men," he added, thinking aloud. "There was a colonel, and General Waltham; and I am sure Sir Thomas, being his intimate friend, is an officer also." He walked round the room, and took down first one book and then another: one or two upon military tactics and the art of fortification, he soon restored to their places; the life of Napoleon was in five volumes—he could not read that through, and didn't know where to begin; otherwise he thought he might have conversed upon him with advantage. At length he hit upon a little work belonging to one of his daughters, bound in red cloth, with abundance of gold tracery about it, and lettered at the back, "*Anecdotes of Military Men*." He could have kissed the book, as he sat down to devour it; so small, so completely to the purpose. These anecdotes were, many of them, lively and interesting, and he did his best to learn by heart those that struck him most. There was but one awkward circumstance; no order in chronology had been observed, and a story of Agesilaus, King of Sparta, came next to one of the Duke of Wellington; while Belisarius and Bonaparte, Julius Cæsar and the Duke of Marlborough, dwelt side by side, as if they had all been of the same age and family. As the short narratives of the doings of each gave no direct information on points the reader was supposed to know, Mr. Clackitt was rather at a loss as to how to arrange his conversational store. The battles, too, which were mentioned, puzzled him much; the only ones he had any knowledge of were the Battle of Waterloo and the Battle of Bunker's Hill; the latter, fought on the birthday of George III, was, from that circumstance, impressed upon his memory; and Waterloo none could forget. He had also a very confused notion of the Peninsular war; very confused—for he could not tell its object, its end, nor the sides in it. Furthermore, he had a very indistinct notion of what peninsulas were in general, and none whatever of the position of this one in particular; but then he found mention of it in several of the anecdotes in the little red book, and he took great care to be up in those especially. And so, full to the brim of heroes and deeds of arms, he got into his carriage.

"Thomas, you haven't got on your diamond ring,"

said Mrs. Clackitt. "I put it on the table for you; how lost you seem!"

Mr. Clackitt got out of the carriage and returned with his ring.

"We shall be so late, pa," said Rosabella.

"Rosy, dear, are you comfortable?" said her mother.

"Yes, ma. Why?"

"You look so stuffed; your face is as red as mine. I hear they had pretty work to make you meet; why didn't you 'ave the 'ooks moved; you'd a' been a deal better able to enjoy yourself."

"Ma, I am quite as I wish to be," said Rosabella, angrily.

"Why, Priss, dear, you've nothing in your hair!"

"No, mother, I couldn't find my wreath; it was taken into Rosabella's room."

"What a pity!"

"Why? I like it better without."

"We ought to be alike," said Rosabella.

"But you are not at all," thought Mrs. Clackitt.

The carriage drove up the avenue, and stopped at the great entrance.

"Let me out *fast*," said Mrs. Clackitt.

"Now, Miss Clackitt!" and Miss Clackitt, who wore feathers, got out, slightly damaging their direction against the door-case of the carriage.

"Now, Rosybeller!" and she descended with extreme caution, but not without rupturing a hook.

"I declare," said her mother, "Rosy's gown is begun to bust; they said it would."

Priscilla, who, in spite of having schooled her heart most diligently, was envying the coachman who had to return home on the box, got into the hall without any accident, and soon they were ushered into the drawing-room, where all the Walthams were assembled.

If Priscilla and all her family had plunged headlong into the sea, she could not have more completely given up the whole party for lost. The dazzling light, the strange faces, but above all, the knowledge of the rank and probable style of mind of those assembled, overpowered her; and thankful was she to find a seat which a large old screen nearly hid from view. She scarcely had lifted her eyes to survey the persons around her. She was aware that her mother had been placed on the sofa by Mrs. Waltham; but she knew no more. The entrance of some guest took Miss Waltham away, and being left for the moment alone her eye rested on a magnificent timepiece that stood on a bracket near her. It gave her at once pain and relief. It had figures of Time and his scythe, and other solemn allegorical devices; and she tried to realise the fact that Time would soon pass; that the finger that was now at six would quickly rest on ten; and that then this hateful dinner-party would be over. "Why should I distress myself," she thought; "are not all these who make my heart beat so dying men and women? I will try and rise above it. I will try and fancy myself with dear Miss Manners. Oh, that I were!"

A gentle voice, and a chair drawn near to hers, aroused her.

"You are in deep thought, Miss Priscilla. Are you learning the moral of the time-piece?"

It was Mr. Middleton.

There was something so truly kind in his tone and manner, that Priscilla, already agitated, was overcome, and felt as if tears would bring her relief. This was something remarkable for her, as she was not given to such demonstrations of feeling.

"You dislike being here; never mind, we will have a pleasant evening. I have no great desire to be here just now, so we can sympathise."

Up to this time, Priscilla had shrunk from Mr. Middleton. She respected him as a teacher, but, not knowing his true character, she had felt sure that the contempt he must have for her father's assumption would extend itself over the whole family. Every visit he paid to the Hall she looked on as an act of kindness and sufferance, or as a conscience work—a necessary sacrifice from the clergyman to the parishioner. She had avoided him in every way, not caring to trespass on his gentlemanly endurance; but this little speech, so uttered, threw down all her preconceived notions that she shared his contempt. She was not able at the instant to command her voice to answer, but she looked at him with a gratitude that showed she appreciated his kindness.

"I am very glad, indeed, of this opportunity of seeing and talking to you. I never find you alone at your own house; and if we chance to meet in other places, you vanish before I can lay hold of you. So pray don't lament over this evening as quite thrown away, for I mean you to do me some service, you see."

"If I could—if I could *think* I could, I should indeed rejoice; it is my sorrow that I seem to do service to no one."

"Well, that's good cause for sorrow; I won't quarrel with you about that; but I hope you will have less cause for it than you fancy, and I shall be glad to help you to get rid of what justly belongs to you."

"That would be kind indeed."

"I have some work for you; but dinner is announced, let me take you in; we shall find time for a little chat afterwards. I never sit long at table, so you will see me soon back in this room."

And he took her in; and so unobtrusively attentive was he, so interesting in his conversation, that Priscilla forgot *herself*—forgot how to behave—or that it was necessary to behave at all. Consequently, she behaved as well as if she had dined in high life from babyhood.

Good Mrs. Clackitt paid the minutest attention to every sauce and metamorphosed meat. With the same spirit of inquiry that animated Mr. Layard among the mounds of Nineveh, did she watch the uncovering of dishes.

Miss Clackitt was lost in the dream of being really at the Manor House dinner-table. She bowed and smiled and waved her feathers, and took everything that was offered, and was on the point of drinking healths all round, when she caught Rosabella's eye, and for that time the Clackitt honour was saved by a look of lightning.

Rosabella would have been more comfortable if she could have moved her arms and breathed freely; but, *trussed* as she was, it was no small effort to use her knife and fork; and *laced* as she was, respiration became at last a painful business. With the true spirit of a martyr, she bore all. She was at the Manor House. Colonel Defford had led her in to dinner, and Sir Thomas McRocket was on her other side. What was pain—what was starvation—what was suffocation to Rosabella Clackitt under such circumstances?

Mr. Clackitt's face betrayed a mixture of delight and pain; he was so anxious to make a good impression that he lost every opportunity of speaking, in

wondering what was the best thing to say. He had been appointed to take Mrs. Waltham in to dinner; for it was an understood thing that all honour was to be paid to the Clackitt family on this their first (and it was hoped and intended—for a long time at any rate—their last) visit to the Manor House. Blunders, many and strange, he made, but, being ignorant of them, they gave him no pain; and a want of confidence in himself was not his weak point.

At length the ladies withdrew; and "now," thought Mr. Clackitt, "for my little red book!"

"What a wonderful art 'fortification' is," he began—champagne having greatly emboldened him; "I quite envy gentlemen of your profession; it is so very interesting."

At that moment Sir Thomas McRocket and General Waltham were deep in conversation on the probable reduction of rents through the failure of the potato, and were in progress to the various theories as to the origin of the disease; but the clear, loud tone in which Mr. Clackitt delivered himself brought all eyes on him. He had fairly thrown down the gauntlet; and Sir Thomas, who had more wit than mercy, and who had watched, and been much amused with, his little peccadilloes at dinner, immediately took it up.

"You are right, sir; it is a most charming art. You have studied it, of course?"

"Oh, very little indeed; but I am exceedingly fond of all things relating to a military life. I have several books about tactics, which are delightfully interesting."

"May I ask whose they are?"

"My own, sir; all my own. I've a very fine library,—no need to borrow books. I think all people of substance ought to have good libraries."

General Waltham was going to explain what the question meant; but Sir Thomas impatiently interrupted him.

"I am so glad, Mr. Clacker, you are up in fortifications. Perhaps you will be able to settle a little dispute between me and Colonel Defford, about an action in the Peninsular war."

"Really, I know just nothing," said Mr. Clackitt, with vehement sincerity. "All I know about the Peninsular war is, what wonderful things you gentlemen of the red coat did there."

"Now, I'm sure, Mr. Clack, you are up in that war. I know it by your eye. Of all things I love a good story, and I'm never tired of those times. General, the wine stands. Now, Mr. Clacker, I see a story at your fingers' ends. Come, out with it. Attention to Mr. Clack's story!"

"Oh, a mere trifle or two; I dare say you remember it;" and then, gathering up his faculties to their highest effort, he delivered an anecdote of Prince Eugene.

"Capital!" shouted Sir Thomas, "and so correct. I remember all about it. Go on, Mr. Clacker."

Mr. Middleton attempted to give the unfortunate man a hint of his situation—though he felt he deserved exposure—but Sir Thomas kept Mr. Clackitt from observing.

"Go on, Mr. Clacker, go on. Attend, there's another story."

And Mr. Clackitt did go on, making Marlborough the hero of Agincourt, and Belisarius the victor of Troy, till all but Sir Thomas, who had absolute command of his countenance, were convulsed with laughter.

Sir Thomas had lost one eye, and wore a shade to conceal the defect. As he sat with his face full on his victim, whom he plied with wine and uproarious praise, this attracted Mr. Clackitt's notice; and, beyond himself with the excitement produced by what he believed to be the unbounded success of his anecdotes, and over-stimulated with wine, he exclaimed, "I've no doubt, Sir Thomas, you lost that eye in the field of battle?"

"Alas!" said Sir Thomas, gravely, and with a sigh; "it was warm work with the longbow at the battle of Cressy."

"Ah! and did you not get a pension for it?"

"Well, with the Duke of Wellington and Prince Rupert to make a joint representation of claims, it isn't hard to get on to the good service list. Powerful interest, you know!"

"Very," said the innocent man.

"Although opposed by General Cæsar, they got the day."

Cæsar! Mr. Clackitt had certainly heard somehow and somewhere about one Julius Cæsar, and felt a strong suspicion that he had lived a very long time ago. He looked at Sir Thomas with a sort of staggered look.

The baronet saw that he had overshot his mark. "I don't mean the old gentleman, you know, that conquered Britain; another of the same name."

General Waltham here interposed, assuring Mr. Clackitt that Sir Thomas had a long tongue and short memory, and could not be depended upon.

"Don't believe him, my dear Cracker," exclaimed Sir Thomas; "he's jealous. He was away on foreign service at the time, and knows nothing about it."

Things would not have gone to the length they did, had Mr. Middleton remained; but—true to his promise to Priscilla, and pained, not amused, at Mr. Clackitt's folly, and Sir Thomas's unchristian attack upon it—he soon joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

"Have you seen these prints?" he said to Priscilla; and thus drawing her to a side table, he entered into a conversation with her, so replete with interest that she soon became absorbed in the subject of it.

Mrs. Clackitt—whose kind heart warmed towards Mrs. Waltham, first in gratitude to her for her considerate attentions, but also on account of her evident ill-health—was quite at home, and much more chatty than Mr. Clackitt would have approved of, had he been there. She made many minute inquiries into the complaints of her hostess, recommended many remedies, and entered into an elaborate account of all cases, similar and dissimilar, that she had ever heard of. At last, having exhausted that topic, and one or two others, just as one of those dead pauses—which sometimes occur, even among a company of ladies—reigned in the room, she pointed to the wide, old-fashioned fireplace and the blazing pile, supported on either side by animals resembling the stone guardians of the gates, and said, "Pray, Mrs. Waltham, ma'am, what may you use for your grates? I've tried common black-lead, and patent, and servant's friend, and Naples lustre, and all manner, and I'm sure we've plenty of hands, and I'm always going on about it, and yet I can't get ours to look near so bright."

Mrs. Waltham politely pleaded ignorance on the subject, but promised to ascertain from the house-keeper, and let Mrs. Clackitt know.

"Thank'ee, ma'am, that's very good-natured, I'm sure."

Little did she imagine what a rod she had put in pickle for herself; little did she suppose that she was driving daggers into the hearts of her sister-in-law and her daughter Rosabella. As to Priscilla, she was too deeply engaged with Mr. Middleton to hear any one else.

Rosabella's spirits had risen during dinner. She had recovered from the shock of finding herself among her betters, and now the predominant desire to distinguish herself, and make an impression, became evident. She talked about music, and her devotion to it; made attempts at quoting poetry, of which she said she was rapturously fond; and declared that she doted on astronomy.

Miss Waltham, who had taken the burthen of her, and to whom she made all these statements, listened with kind and hospitable forbearance, which Rosabella interpreted into admiration.

"I suppose you have an observatory," said she. "Pa ought to have had one when he built the Hall; but he has promised me that he will have one put up, and then, of course, we shall have a first-rate telescope, and all that sort of thing."

Miss Waltham said the Manor House could not boast of either observatory or telescope.

And Rosabella having made remarks showing how intimate she was with all the constellations, and how well acquainted she was with all the reasons why the moon is not inhabited, went off to other subjects, on all of which she had the conversation to herself, with the exception of such remarks as the politeness of her auditor constrained her occasionally to insert.

At last, being wearied out with her incessant talking, Miss Waltham asked her whether, as she was so devoted to music, she played much.

"Not nearly so much as I could wish. You see we have had no society here at all, and we find it difficult to keep our music up."

"I thought there seemed some very nice people about here. Mamma is so delicate that we are not very neighbourly; but I think I have heard music in passing some of the houses in Inglebrook."

"Ah, yes, I dare say," said Rosabella, colouring, "but pa does not like our visiting in Inglebrook."

"No?" said Miss Waltham, with an air of surprise; "but there is Mrs. Flummers, the wife of the doctor, I have heard she is musical; don't you know her?"

"Oh, of course we know her, but then pa doesn't like us to be too intimate with people of that sort."

Miss Waltham looked more surprised still, and was on the point of inquiring what "sort" of people Miss Rosabella's papa thought worthy of her acquaintance, when a call from her mother took her away for a few minutes. This left Rosabella with Miss McRocket for a neighbour—a young lady who, in character, was the counterpart of her father, and who, having occupied the chair near Miss Waltham's, had been enjoying to the full the conversation that had just passed.

"Are you fond of botany?" said the indefatigable Rosabella. "Inglebrook has most beautiful wild flowers. Our governess gave me a 'Flora Helvetica,' which she brought from her last tour, and I am making one of this place; I should be most happy to show it you."

"Thank you," said Miss McRocket, less coldly

than she would have done if she had not been glad of the offer, for it happened that she was a botanist, and she had already made more than one expedition in the country round in search of plants, and Rosabella had seen her with her tin case and little trowel. "I've secured her," she thought, as she watched Miss McRocket's relaxing expression. Miss Waltham returned at this moment, and said, "Miss Clackitt, my mother would be obliged if you would favour us with a little music. Do you think there is anything here that you would like?" pointing to a large portfolio.

"I generally play duets."

"Oh, we will ask your sister, then," said Miss Waltham; "where is she? I have scarcely seen her;" and, turning round, she saw Priscilla—her head resting on her hand—looking attentively at Mr. Middleton, who was reading something to her in a low voice. Miss Waltham smiled.

"I think she is too well engaged to be disturbed," she said; "will you play something alone?"

With affected reluctance, but with intense delight, she rose to comply. She had the highest opinion of her musical powers, and so far as rapid rattling of keys went, she was justified in her judgment.

Selecting music that she knew, and calculated on executing in first-rate style, she sat down, with no other fear than that she should not display her powers to the full. Miss Waltham, relieved from her oppressive chatter, looked with curious interest at Priscilla, and remarked to Miss Vernon, "How unlike those two sisters are—remarkable, is it not?"

"I should think it would be impossible to find two like the one that's making that noise," said Miss Vernon.

In the vehemence with which Rosabella endeavoured to excite the admiration of the company, she forgot her pinioned condition, and the predictions of Pinner and Rachel; and in the middle of a very astonishing passage, a sharp, short crack announced that a hook on which much depended had given way.

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Clackitt, confidentially, to Mrs. Waltham, "poor Rosy 'as busted—they said she would; girls are so foolish! Between you and me, she thought so much of coming here, and was so anxious to look nice, that she gave Miss Gimp very pinching measure—no doubt she'll go off again afore the night's over. I heard one go at dinner."

No sooner was the piece finished than Mrs. Clackitt went up to Rosabella and said in a loud whisper, "Rosy, dear, let me put in a pin afore the gentlemen come in; you show all white behind—you do, indeed."

Rosabella rose from the piano—her face scarlet with mortification—unable either to silence her mother, or prevent her following her round the room, with a little pincushion hid in her hand, to repair the damage.

Rosabella declined playing any more unless Priscilla would join her; and Miss Waltham, with some reluctance, approached the table, where, still engaged in earnest, quiet talk, Mr. Middleton and Priscilla sat: "Your sister wishes you to play a duet with her: would you like it?"

"Not now, please," said Priscilla, with equal simplicity and sincerity.

Miss Waltham did not repeat the request, for at that moment the gentlemen entered the room; tea was brought in, and music was not again resorted to. Mr. Clackitt looked much flushed and excited.

"I hope Thomas won't be the wus' for this to-

morrow," whispered Mrs. Clackitt to Mrs. Waltham. "He has fits sometimes after he has been put a little beyond himself; and he's not used to company, you see."

Ten o'clock came. Mr. Middleton pointed to the timepiece, and looked significantly at Priscilla.

"The first few minutes I was here were longer to me than all the rest of the evening has been, thanks to your kindness," she said.

"Nay, you have done your part, and I must return thanks to you," was his reply.

They were in the carriage!

"What delightful people!" said Mr. Clackitt. "I would not have missed Sir Thomas McRocket for a hundred pounds."

"Well, I'm sure, then, he must be the best of the family," said his wife. "I wish you'd 'a seen the face his wife made when I said if she was agoin' to stay here we should be glad to see her and her daughter."

"How thoroughly incorrect of you to say so, Mary," said her husband. "No wonder she was annoyed; it was highly improper."

"Improper! Well, I'm sure, I thought as it was only kind and civil. I asked Flummers's cousins when they was visiting there."

"Flummers's cousins, indeed!—when will you drop those Flummerses. I suppose there's a difference between Sir Thomas and Lady McRocket—and the Flummerses?"

Mrs. Clackitt was rather awed by the irritated tone in which her husband spoke, and thought silence her wisest course; so she turned to Rosabella, and ventured to ask her if she had enjoyed herself.

Rosabella, who had not forgotten, nor forgiven, her mother's sympathy with her hooks, vouchsafed no reply; but, addressing her father, pronounced Miss McRocket to be a charming girl; Miss Waltham delightfully amiable, but dull; and gave so flowing a description of what she had said and done, that Mr. Clackitt doubted not that she had exalted the family name and fame in the drawing-room, with the same success that had crowned his efforts in the dining-room. This restored him to placidity; and he retired to bed, longing for daylight, that he might turn his brilliant fortunes to account.

When Priscilla wished her mother good-night, she looked so happy, that the old lady said, "I do believe our Priss has had the pleasantest evening of us all, she looks so quiet and comfortable."

And she was quite right. Priscilla had spent a pleasant evening. From Mr. Middleton she had heard things worth remembering, and which did her good in the highest sense.

M. THIERS.

FEW Frenchmen have been more constantly or more prominently before the public eye for the past half-century than the historian, statesman, and orator whose name stands at the head of this article. Amid all the vicissitudes of French history, from the downfall of Charles x to the accession of Emile Ollivier as premier, M. Thiers has always been in the foreground. In office, he has displayed an energy and passionate love of his profession such as few men have exhibited; out of office, he has known how to turn from the turmoils of the tribune and the vexa-

tions of the council board, to the laborious but pleasant paths of historical letters. And it is hard to say in which he is most eminent, and for what he will be longest honoured by posterity—whether his bold and positive statesmanship, his nervous and aggressive oratory, or the purity and force of his historical writings. The first quality won for him the premiership; the second gave him a power in the legislature which seems hardly yet to have waned; the third secured him, in 1833, when he was but thirty-six, a fauteuil as one of the Forty of the French Academy. His versatility is one of his most marked traits, and stamps him a true Provençal. Now, in his seventy-third year, he still seems as vigorous and laborious, as pugnacious and eager for the forensic fray, as in the earlier days when he declaimed against Bourbon oppression, and forced himself upon the unwilling doctrinaires of the Louis Philippe era.

Adolphe Thiers was born at Marseilles—a town prolific of men of genius—on the 16th of April, 1797. Unlike his great and almost life-long rival, Guizot, his parentage was humble, both father and mother belonging to the lower middle-class. He received his education by means of a charity instituted at Marseilles by Napoleon I, by which a certain number of scholars were admitted free. A French writer (Mirecourt) tells us, that at school Thiers was "quarrelsome, obstinate, indolent, and disobedient." In short, he was not one of those precocious children who inspire prophecies of future greatness. It is related of him, as an illustration of his early traits, that he one day put some wax on the teacher's seat, whereby the worthy man was stuck to his place, to the immense amusement of the scholars and his own chagrin. For this Adolphe was locked in the garret for three days, being reduced to rations of bread and water. As he grew older he grew more studious, and finally plunged into his studies with the same passionate force which he formerly used in his quarrels with his classmates and his rebellions against his teachers. He rose to be the first scholar in the school, and for several successive years won the highest prize offered to the pupils for general proficiency. He had formed an earnest taste for books, and instead of pursuing, as his parents intended he should, a mercantile career, on leaving school he turned his attention to the study of the law. At the same time he began a course of historical reading, that seeming, thus early, to be the direction to which his mind leaned. He had grown up amid the splendid traditions of the first Empire, and was a doughty young partisan of the "Recluse of St. Helena." Admitted to the bar at Aix, the old capital of his native province, he went, in his twenty-third year, to Paris, where he was enrolled among the advocates of the metropolis.

From this time Thiers seems to have had three loves, and to have constantly wavered between them—literature, law, and politics. "He brought with him," says a biographer, "a whole system of philosophy in his head." The intellectual temptations of Paris, the brilliant fields which it opened to his view, lured him soon away from his proper profession, and there was but little studying of the Code or pleading at the Correctional Police, after he reached there. He quickly made the acquaintance of some of the leading *litterati*, editors, and politicians. His ardour and wit were discerned, and he was everywhere welcomed as a valuable recruit to whatever party he

should join. His studies took a wider range; he now delved into philosophy and finance, into rhetoric and international law, political economy and the science of administration. His remarkable memory and keen zest enabled him to retain the most important maxims which came before his eyes. Meanwhile he took a zealous interest in the political movements of the day, assiduously attended the sessions of the Chamber, where he witnessed with delight and envy the stormy debates between the Bourbon ministers and the foremost Liberals of the day. He saw the great orator, Manuel, expelled from the Legislative Hall for the violence of one of his speeches; and the young Provençal, indignant and hot-headed, rushed up to the great man in the street, and exclaimed to him, "Vengeance, Manuel! As a deputy you are inviolable; your enemies have broken the charter!" Manuel was struck by his boldness and passion, invited him to his house, and soon after gave him a desk in the office of the "Constitutionnel," of which Manuel was chief editor. It was just the opportunity he had yearned for. His editorials became famous for their courage, pith, and aggressive irony. He was remarked by the Liberal leaders, who encouraged him to pursue the line which he had taken. He made the acquaintance of Lafitte, the Liberal banker, and especially of the aged Talleyrand, who, though chary of his praise, praised young Thiers to his friends without stint. Thiers had just commenced his famous "History of the Revolution." Talleyrand said that it would be a great work, but he feared the politicians would not leave the young historian time to finish it. Thiers did not leave it doubtful that he sympathized with the Liberal opposition. Serious events were preparing, and the young editor every day became more and more influential with his party.

Prince Polignac was Prime Minister, and the throne of the last Bourbon sovereign was beginning then to totter. In January of the eventful year 1830, Thiers left the "Constitutionnel," to found, in company with Carvel, an eminent Liberal, a more thorough-going opposition paper. This resulted in the famous "National." It was in the columns of this courageous journal that Thiers gave utterance to the memorable saying, "Le roi regne, et ne gouverne pas" (The king reigns, but does not rule). Disciple as he was of the first revolution, he did not, however, go to the extent of wishing to overthrow the monarchy by a repetition of its horrors. On the morning of July 27, 1830, the day before that which was fatal to the crown of Charles x, Thiers was in his sanctum; a commissary of police entered with a posse of *gens d'armes*, and, in spite of the editor's remonstrances, proceeded to break up his presses. In spite of this indignity, and although he saw that the revolution was about to burst upon the city, Thiers was yet unwilling that events should come to the bitter end of force. Although he detested the government, he essayed to save it. He hurried to the chief of the Liberals, Casimir Perier, where the prominent members of the party had gathered, and urged upon them the necessity of preventing a collision of the troops. His remonstrances were vain.

The next morning—July 28—the storm came. Thiers, with all his passion and headstrong temper, had not a little caution in his character, and amid events which were inevitable, was disposed to make the best of his opportunities. After conferring with

M. Guizot, and finding it probable that he would be arrested, he left Paris and rejoined some friends outside the fortifications. Meanwhile the weak government succumbed, Polignac fell, Charles x fled from the Tuilleries, and the insurrection, almost without a blow, held the city. Thiers hurried back to town, went to Lafitte's, where the Liberal leaders were assembled, and startled the meeting by proposing the Duke of Orleans for the vacant throne. After some hesitation the suggestion was adopted, and the Duke accepted the proffer, and Louis Philippe of Orleans became King of the French.

Owing his throne to the advocacy of Thiers, the new sovereign naturally took him as one of his chief advisers. At this date began Thiers' brilliant career as a statesman. For ten years we find him almost constantly holding high office. He became Minister of Finance in the administration of his friend Lafitte; was elected to the Chamber from Aix; and two years later, in 1832, he was entrusted with the portfolio of the Interior. He soon after became Minister of Commerce and Public Works. In 1836 we find him Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and again in the same office in 1840. Not only did he prove himself an able and efficient minister in all of these various offices, requiring each of them abilities peculiar and distinct, but he now shone in the Chamber as one of its greatest orators. With the heat of temperament which he derived from the warm southern province of his birth, and the pugnacious disposition which had displayed itself from childhood upward, he attacked his opponents right and left, electrifying the assembly from the tribune, defending his acts with great force, and overwhelming all who did not agree with him by his irony and denunciation. The cold and formal Guizot found in him a redoubtable antagonist, ever watchful, quick to perceive an error of judgment or policy, and determined to hit his mark.

When Lafitte was driven from power, and Casimir Perier became Premier, Thiers boldly transferred his abilities to the services of the new minister. This made him extremely unpopular. He was accused of deserting his oldest friends, and the epithet of "traitor" was hurled at him by his old colleagues. At Aix he was mobbed in his hotel by a furious crowd, who threw stones at his window, and threatened to hang him to a lamp-post. He only saved himself by a timely flight, and by giving himself a protection behind the bayonets of the garrison. But his energy and perseverance overcame the hostility of politicians and people, and in 1836 he became Prime Minister, holding the offices of Foreign Secretary and President of the Council of State. It was partly by his influence that Isabella II was placed on the throne of Spain in exclusion of Prince Don Carlos; that France threw her weight into the scale against making Egypt a government independent of the Sublime Porte; and he did what he could to prevent the establishment of the Belgian kingdom. It was due to him that the remains of Napoleon I, which had long rested obscurely at St. Helena, were brought in pomp to Paris, and that, with a splendid funeral pageant, they were laid "by the banks of the Seine, in the midst of the people I love so well."

It was also during his premiership that one of the most romantic episodes of modern French history, the capture of the Duchess de Berri—whose recent death will be fresh in the memory of our readers—took place. The duchess was the widow of the only

son of the ex-king Charles x, and the mother of Henry of Bordeaux, grandson of the ex-king, and consequently the Bourbon, or Legitimist, heir to the throne. She was a resolute and attractive lady, and, resolved to attempt the restoration of her infant son, she made a plan to enter France, penetrate to loyal La Vendée, and there to rouse the people to insurrection in following the white flag of Bourbon royalty. Thiers was alarmed, and saw that the only way to prevent a serious outbreak was to secure the person of the duchess. His measures to that end had but poor success. One day, however, he was invited by an anonymous letter to meet a man, at ten o'clock at night, under the trees in the Champs Elysées, who would betray the duchess into his hands. This man proved to be a renegade Jew named Deutz. The minister went to the rendezvous; the bargain was sealed; Deutz declared that he knew where the duchess was, and would secure her, and for this service he asked a million francs. The duchess was in hiding at Nantes; Deutz, with two gendarmes, went directly to her hiding-place, and she was arrested and imprisoned; but was soon after, through Thiers's leniency, politely conducted out of France, with a courteous intimation that she would do well to remain beyond the frontier.

In 1840, after ten years' almost continuous enjoyment of office, Thiers found himself forced to yield it up, and was succeeded by his old rival, Guizot. While minister, he had, however, found time to complete his noble "History of the French Revolution," which, begun in 1823, was finished in 1832. Finding himself, in 1840, relieved of the onerous duties of power, he rested awhile from political life, seldom appearing, except on grave and great occasions, on the old arena. He reverted to his literary pursuits, and now took up the continuation, or sequel, of his "Revolution," which Talleyrand had recommended him to undertake. This was the "History of the Consulate and Empire," which, in his periods of leisure, he continued to write, from 1840 down to 1864, when the last—the twentieth—volume was published. It is the general judgment that the "Revolution" is the greater work of the two; it was written in the full glow of youthful enthusiasm, and before the statesman had modified the generous and perhaps too partial insight of the student. It was when the startling events of 1847 announced the approach of the third revolution, that Thiers was summoned from his study to play once more a leading part in public events.

Early in February, 1848, it became evident that Guizot could no longer retain power. Public disturbances became frequent and more and more ominous. The banquets began to be held, and the revolutionary leaders to threaten openly to overturn the monarchy. Guizot, who had grown extremely unpopular, resigned; Count Molé, a shade more liberal, was called to the helm, but failed to stem the tide; then the King called on Thiers and Odillon Barrot to save his throne; but they arrived too late. Thiers attempted to form a popular cabinet, but even as he deliberated the insurrection broke out, the barricades were thrown up, and collisions between the troops and the populace took place. Thiers harangued the mob, but they would not listen. The palace was attacked, the King fled through the garden, the revolution triumphed, the Provisional Government took up its place at the Hotel de Ville.

And where was fiery, restless little Monsieur

Thiers? Not at all annihilated, not by any means discouraged, but still bold, energetic, and active. He went down with the monarchy in February, in June we find him reappearing in the Constituent Convention of the Republic, chosen by four electoral districts, and electing to sit for the city of Paris. Seeing the Republic to be inevitable, he acquiesced in it, and put his shoulder to the wheel to make the best of it. He took a very active part in the proceedings of the Convention, was prominent in the debates on the new constitution, for which he voted, and acted as the moderate or Conservative leader. When the June insurrection took place, he strongly supported the proposal to make Cavaignac dictator. It is curious to observe that while Thiers was in the Constituent a leading Conservative, the present Emperor—then Prince Louis Napoleon, deputy—was one of the most radical Democrats. Still, when the time for choosing a President of the Republic came, Thiers opposed the dictator Cavaignac whom he had helped to create, and sustained the candidature of Prince Louis Napoleon. So ardent a partisan was he then of Napoleon, that he fought a duel with a brother deputy for hinting that Thiers had once thought that the election of a Bonaparte would be a disgrace to France.

The Prince President elected and duly installed, Thiers at first gave his policy a cordial and effective support. He approved and defended the French expedition to and occupation of Rome—the first act which alienated the President from his former associates the Republicans. The latter resolving to impeach him, Thiers vehemently opposed this course. At the same time we hear of him urging upon the Government the granting of full liberty of instruction. But at last Thiers began to catch a glimpse of the real tendencies of the President; and we find him gradually swaying over to the Opposition, of which he eventually became the leader. The celebrated electoral law, restricting the suffrage, being proposed by Napoleon, Thiers combated it, and, completely disgusted with his former favourite, he came off to England, on a visit to the ex-king Louis Philippe. Notwithstanding that sovereign had departed from his advice, and had latterly neglected him, Thiers always remained at heart loyal to the Orleans dynasty, and even now is regarded as the chief of the Orleans party in France. Returning to the Chamber, he began to attack the President with the same heat with which he had formerly defended him. Early in 1851, it was no longer doubtful that the Prince was proceeding rapidly to the foundation of an Empire. Thiers did his utmost to persuade the Legislature to oppose him. "If the Chamber hesitates," said he, in a famous speech, "there will hereafter be but one power; the form of the Government itself will be changed, and the Empire will be re-established;" a prophecy which was within a year literally fulfilled. When the *coup d'état* of December 2nd, 1851, took place, the President, as is well known, had the leading Opposition members of the Chamber arrested at daybreak. Among them was Thiers, who was asleep in bed when the commissaire of police came. The officer awoke the statesman, and compelled him to dress and go with him. The little fiery man protested and talked about the law, but it was of no avail. He was imprisoned for a fortnight with his colleagues at the Conciergerie, then was politely conducted beyond the frontier. He was exiled. He

spent half a year travelling in England, Switzerland, and Italy; at the end of that time he was permitted to return to his own country, for matters were then so far settled that he was no longer feared. The President had appealed to France, and had been

moderate than some of his colleagues, he was never quite what is called an "Irreconcilable;" but, excepting on one or two occasions, he has constantly spoken and acted against the Emperor's ministers. He sustained the second expedition to Rome,



M. Thiers

elected by the people to serve as President for ten years longer.

There being no political opportunities for him when he returned, Thiers resumed his labour on his "History of the Consulate and Empire." He was silent through the time of the foundation and formation of the Second Empire, and only reappeared in political life when the general election of 1863 approached. Then he offered himself as a candidate for the Chamber in one of the Paris districts, having finally persuaded himself to take the oath to the Empire as he had done to the Republic, and to endeavour to mitigate the "evils" of personal government. He was chosen by the Liberal votes of the district, and was one of the famous "Five" members of the Opposition in the Chamber. More

separating, with Berryer, on this question, from the mass of the Opposition. He was re-elected as deputy for Paris in the last election, and when the Emperor introduced constitutional reform, and called upon M. Ollivier to form a Liberal ministry, Thiers announced that he would support the new Government independently, but declined to take office. He has been a constant opponent of the Emperor's foreign policy, disapproving of the Crimean and Italian wars, opposing the Mexican expedition, and advocating opposition to Prussia, and a policy hostile to the doctrine of nationalities. He has also been stoutly inimical to the free-trade policy of the Empire, opposing the Treaty of Commerce with England, and being still the most energetic champion of the French Protectionists.

Although past threescore and ten, Thiers appears to have lost none of that physical and mental vigour for which he was noted forty years ago. His face glows with ruddy health, his rather piercing black eye is bright, his step has an elastic vigour, and his every movement is quick and restless. A large, round head and face, the hair snow-white, thick, and short cut; a high and rather narrow forehead, a strong, bold nose, lips thin, determined, and wearing a rather belligerent expression; a firm, positive chin, a short, dumpy body, stoutish, but not corpulent; and fierce eyes behind a pair of gold spectacles, which add largely to the general expression of determination and combativeness which all his features betray—such is Thiers. His manner of speaking is earnest, yet dignified, nervous, trenchant, often rapid and eager. He stands forth boldly, and uses the plainest and shortest modes of expression. His voice is round and sonorous, and he uses but few gestures, except in the more impassioned parts of his address. He commands the closest and most respectful attention from all sides of the Chamber when he speaks, and when it is announced that he will address the House, both the Chamber and the galleries are crowded with a multitude of eager listeners. He gives such variety and expression, alike to the tones of his voice, the movement of his declamation, and to the matter of his subject, that he carries his audience with a never-flagging interest. He is one of the few statesmen who, by his individuality, can lend attraction to the driest topics; and his speeches on commercial and financial subjects are as eagerly heard and read as those on foreign policy, or the affairs of the army. No man ever bore age more lightly, notwithstanding his long and troubled career, full of incident, vicissitude, and conflict. Admitted to the French Academy in 1833, he soon afterwards was elected also a colleague of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Few men have been so highly honoured by so great a variety of distinctions; and so vigorous is his health and so unimpaired his mental powers, that we may still anticipate for some years more his brilliant speeches and the continuance of his important services to France.

THE COTTAGE HOMES OF ENGLAND.

I.

"The cottage homes of England!
By thousands on her plains,
They are smiling o'er the silvery brooks,
And round the hamlet-fanes.
Through glowing orchards forth they peep,
Each from its nook of leaves;
And fearless there the lowly sleep,
As the bird beneath their eaves."

VERY pretty and very true from an artistic point of view, but how complete an illusion in every other sense it is the intention of these papers to show. Crabbe, who saw things as they really were, and knew, better than most, the actual condition of the English peasantry, has warned us against this simply picturesque view of the matter:

"Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please,
Go, if the peaceful cot your praises snare,
Go, look within, and ask if peace be there;

If peace be his, that drooping, weary sire,
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire,
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth the expiring brand."

But his words fail to convey the moral misery of the case. They show us the sordid poverty which crouches within those poetical cots, but of the demoralisation which results from that poverty they do not speak. Here is the testimony of one who has had wider opportunities of observation, and an express commission to discover the actual conditions of cottage life in England.

"The majority of the cottages that exist in rural parishes are deficient in almost every requisite that should constitute a home for a Christian family in a civilised community. They are deficient in bedroom accommodation, very few having three chambers, and in some parishes the larger proportion only one. They are deficient in drainage and sanitary arrangements; they are imperfectly supplied with water; such conveniences as they have are often so situated as to become nuisances; they are full enough of drafts to generate any amount of rheumatism; and in many instances are lamentably dilapidated and out of repair.

"It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of such a state of things in every aspect, physical, social, economical, moral, intellectual. Physically, a ruinous, ill-drained cottage, 'cribbed, cabin'd, confined,' and over-crowded, generates any amount of disease, fevers of every type, catarrh, rheumatism, as well as intensifies to the utmost that tendency to scrofula and phthisis which, from their frequent intermarriages and their low diet, abounds so largely among the poor. Socially, nothing can be more wretched than the condition of 'open' parishes like Docking, in Norfolk, and South Cerney, in Gloucestershire, into which have been poured remorselessly the scum and off-secur of their 'close' neighbours. . . .

"The moral consequences are fearful to contemplate. 'I only wonder,' writes one clergyman to me, 'that our agricultural poor are as moral as they are.' Modesty must be an unknown virtue, decency an unimaginable thing, where, in one small chamber . . . two and sometimes three generations are herded promiscuously, . . . where the whole atmosphere is sensual, and human nature is degraded into something below the level of the swine. It is a hideous picture, and the picture is drawn from life."

Such is the report of Dr. Fraser, the present Bishop of Manchester, and one of the Assistant Commissioners appointed under a commission from her Majesty, to inquire "into the employment of children, young persons, and women in agriculture."

In 1864 a careful and elaborate inquiry was made by Dr. Hunter into the house accommodation of rural labourers, and embodied in the seventh report of the medical officer of the privy council for presentation to parliament. Every page of that report testifies to the "insufficient quantity and miserable quality." But summing up the results of the inquiry, the medical officer says, "even the general badness of dwellings is an evil infinitely less urgent than their numerical insufficiency." In proof of the extent of the evil, he adduces the fact brought out by Dr. Hunter's inquiries, that in 821 separate parishes or townships in England, there had been a destruction of houses going on during the previous ten years, "notwithstanding increased local demand for them."

"People do not desert villages," it is said "villages nowadays desert people."

The cause is traced to the temptation certain provisions of the poor-law held out to large land-owners to get rid of the poor-rates, by the simple process of getting rid of the poor. Those provisions of the poor-law which related to chargeability and settlement rendered it the pecuniary interest of every parish to lessen the number of the poor residing within its boundaries. When, therefore, a parish was the sole property of one, or of two or three great landlords, "they had only to resolve that there should be no labourers' dwellings on their estates, and their estates were thenceforth virtually free from half their responsibility for the poor." We have thrown this sentence of the report of 1864 into the past tense, for since it was written the union chargeability bill has changed all this, but the evil done remains. Other causes have doubtless been at work, such as the conversion of arable into pasture land, or the desire to get rid of an eyesore which interfered with the picturesque beauty of an estate; but it seems certain that the cause referred to has been the principal one. When, however, we come to understand the wretched pauperism into which our agricultural labourers have drifted, and how heavily large proprietors must feel the burden of the poor-rates, we can see how powerful the temptation must have been. "Agricultural labour," says the report, "instead of implying a safe and permanent independence for the hard-working labourer and his family, implies for the most part only a longer or shorter circuit to eventual pauperism."

Seeing then that the insufficient quantity and miserable quality of the house accommodation of agricultural labourers is so directly connected with their pauperism, it may be worth while to glance first of all at the causes which have brought them into this wretched condition. Those causes briefly may be stated to be the gradual extinction of small farmers and the loss of common rights enjoyed by cottiers from the earliest times. Connect with these two facts the rise in very many articles of domestic economy, without a corresponding increase in their wages, and we have a sufficient explanation of their downward progress.

In feudal times land was held in large masses from the crown, and as the importance of every lord depended upon the number of retainers he could bring into the field, it was his interest to divide his estate into as many farms as he could find tenants to cultivate, and to grant rights of common to each family over the remaining portions. About the middle of the 14th century we first hear of *free labourers* in England, and it would appear that they also were in the enjoyment of rights of pasture, and rights to cut turf or fuel over the lord's wastes.

Professor Thorold Rogers, in his "History of Agriculture and Prices in England, from 1259 to 1793," says: "In the 14th century the land was greatly subdivided, and most of the inhabitants of villages or manors held plots of land, which were sufficient in many cases for maintenance, and in nearly all cases for independence in treating with their employers. Most of the regular farm-servants, the carter, the ploughman, the shepherd, the cowherd, the hog-keeper, were owners of land, and there is a high degree of probability that the occasional labourer was also among the occupiers of the manor.

"The mediæval peasant had his cottage and curti-

lage at a very low rent and in secure possession, even when, unlike the general mass of his fellows, he was not possessed of land in his own right held at a labour or a moneyrent, and he had rights of pasturage over the common lands of the manor for the sheep, pigs, or perhaps cow, which he owned."

This prosperity continued to the close of the 15th century, when the Wars of the Roses broke out, ending in the destruction of the feudal system. Manufactures rose on its ruin, the woollen trade increased greatly, and large tracts of land were required for sheep-walks. This caused at the time a wholesale destruction of villages, so that in a petition presented to parliament in 1450, it is stated that sixty-five towns (villages) and hamlets within twelve miles of Warwick had been destroyed.

Tudor England believed in the importance of men rather than money, and during the whole of the 16th century did its utmost to prevent any decline in the prosperity of the rural population.

An Act was passed in 1487 (4 Hen. VII, c. 16), forbidding any one to take more than one farm, and that its value should not exceed ten marks yearly. In the same year a general Act was passed, "imposing a penalty for not keeping up 'houses of husbandry,' and for not laying convenient land for the maintenance of the same." Similar Acts were passed five times successively in the 16th century. An Act passed in 1549 (3 and 4 Edw. VI, c. 3) secures portions not exceeding two acres or thereabouts, already enclosed on wastes or commons, for garden or orchard purposes, by small cottiers to their use, free from any disturbance by the owner of the waste. One more Act passed in the year 1589 (31 Eliz. c. 7) is peculiarly noteworthy, as forbidding the erection of cottages unless four acres were attached, the object being, as Lord Bacon says of the Act of 1487, "to breed a subject to live in convenient plenty, and no servile condition, and to keep the plough in the hands of the owners, and not mere hirelings."

However some of these Acts may be at variance with the principles of political economy, they were dictated by a spirit of equity, and a desire "to maintain the physical well-being of all classes at the highest possible degree." And it would seem that the result sought was obtained, for towards the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, contemporary authorities declare that the condition of the labourers and small tenants in husbandry "had grown to be more powerful, skilful, and careful, through recompense of gain, than heretofore they had been."

This prosperity, dimmed for a time by the Civil War, was not seriously affected by it, for Lord Macaulay, speaking of the reign of Charles the Second, says: "If we may trust the best statistical writers of that age, not less than a hundred and sixty thousand proprietors, who with their families must have made up more than a seventh of the whole population, derived their subsistence from little freehold estates. The average income of these small landholders, an income made up of rent, profit, and wages, was estimated at between sixty and seventy pounds a year. It was computed that the number of persons who tilled their own land was greater than the number of those who farmed the land of others."

This prosperity continued until the middle of the 18th century, when, from all accounts, it culminated. In the Magazine of the Labourers' Friend Society

(p. 40, vol. 1831), quoted in the later parliamentary report, it is said:—

"Previously to the American war, which commenced in 1775, the agricultural labourer was in a most prosperous condition. His wages gave him a greater command over the necessities of life; his rent was lower, his wearing apparel was cheaper, his shoes cheaper, his living cheaper than formerly; and he had on the common and wastes liberty of cutting furze for fuel, with the chance of getting a little land and in time a small farm."

With the great improvement and extension of modern husbandry commenced the depression and decay of the husbandmen. It was found that large farms could be managed more profitably than small ones. The fate of the small tenants in husbandry was that of the little fry of the pond, the great trout gradually eat them up. The poor and weak began to fall into the ranks of the hired labourer, while their richer neighbour rose in the social scale.

Lord Macaulay has described in a graphic chapter the social state of England at the end of the 17th century. Referring to the immense tracts of country uncultivated at that period, he says:—

"In the year 1685 . . . the arable land and pasture land were not supposed by the best political arithmeticians of that age to amount to much more than half the area of the kingdom. The remainder was believed to consist of moor, forest, and fen. These computations are strongly confirmed by the road books and maps of the 17th century. From these books and maps it is clear that many routes which now pass through an endless succession of orchards, hay-fields, and bean-fields, then ran through nothing but heath, swamp, and warren."

In the year 1710 the first Inclosure Act was passed. From that time up to 1760, only 334,974 statute acres were inclosed, while in the century which followed more than seven millions of statute acres have been added to the cultivated area of Great Britain. The effect of these inclosures on the circumstances of the cottager cannot be better described than in the words of Mr. Cowper-Temple, in a speech made on the second reading of the general Inclosure Bill, March 13, 1844:—

"In former times every cottage almost had some common rights, from which the poor occupants derived much benefit; the privilege of feeding a cow, a pig, or a goose on the common was a great benefit to them, and it was unfortunate when the system of inclosing commons first commenced that a portion of the land was not set apart for the benefit of every cottager who enjoyed common rights, and his successors; but the course adopted had been to compensate the owner of the cottage to which the common rights belonged, forgetting the claims of the occupier by whom they were enjoyed. He believed that if a portion of the inclosed lands had been allotted to every cottager enjoying common rights when the inclosure took place, the agricultural labourer would have been in a far better condition than he was at this time."

If, however, the loss of these common rights had been balanced by a large increase and a higher condition of material comfort, such as has taken place in almost every other class, it might have been borne; but, instead of this being the case, we find that since the peace of 1815, their wages have greatly declined, while there has been an increase in cost of many articles of food and clothing.

Prior to 1815 there was a sort of fictitious prosperity arising from the war, but it only served to make the subsequent destitution the harder to bear. From 1815 to 1846 was a period of continually recurring distress amongst the agriculturists, and the unhappy labourers sank into that pauperism which has now become almost their normal state. Their wages fell to zero, if we may use that term to imply the lowest point to which they could fall compatible with continued existence. In different counties they varied from seven shillings to twelve shillings a week. In Cambridgeshire the farmers paid eight shillings and beer, which made it nine and sixpence; but they said it was only intimidation made them pay such prices. The labourers grew desperate, and in 1830 there were a series of incendiary fires, extending for more than eighteen months, in the counties of Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire.

As the years rolled on better counsels prevailed, and the labourers took a more legitimate way of making their distress known. In the agitation and turmoil of the winter of 1845-46, England must have been startled to find that her rural population had learnt the use of public meetings. There were accounts in the newspapers of gatherings held at night on moors and commons, under circumstances which gave an almost weird-like character to the proceedings. Such a meeting was the one held at Goatacre, in Wilts, on a bleak winter's evening in January, 1846, and reported at great length in the "Times" of the day. It took place at a cross road, and the labourers, their wives and children, came in crowds from the neighbouring villages. A hurdle supported by stakes driven into the ground, and resting beneath a hedge on the roadside, served as a platform, and the speakers read by the flickering light of a candle, or the glare of a lantern, their simple, woe-begone statements. The chairman told the meeting he had but six shillings a week, out of which he had to support a wife and two children. One speaker averaged his earnings for the previous two years at seven shillings and a penny-halfpenny a week, and he had a wife and six children. Another, who had come twenty miles to attend the meeting, told a pathetic story of his struggles with pauperism. Having to provide for his wife and six children out of eight shillings a week, and finding it insufficient, he applied to the relieving officer. He received an order for one of his children to go into the workhouse. "Now, fellow-labourers," said the speaker, "is not one child as dear to you as another. Well, I did not know which to send. I could not part with ne'er a one. I said to my oldest girl, 'You are to go into the workhouse.' She did not like to go, and then I spoke to the others, and then I had the cries of my poor children, which were piercing to my heart, 'Don't send me, father! don't send me!' Was not that enough to try a man, without the presence of starvation." At this meeting, nearly a thousand of the peasantry of Wiltshire were present; and it was a woeful sight when the moon shone out from time to time behind the clouds, and revealed the upturned faces worn with anxiety, want, and hunger.

It is sad to think how little good came out of it all, as far, at least, as the poor agitators themselves were concerned. Nearly twenty years later, Elihu Burritt, in his walk to Land's End, relates the result of a conversation he had with a hedger in Wiltshire. After detailing his own hardships, the man told him

that "his son-in-law had six children, all too young to earn anything in the field, and he had to feed, clothe, and house the whole family out of eight shillings a week. They were obliged to live entirely on bread, for they could not afford to have cheese with it. Take out one-and-sixpence for rent, and as much for fuel, candles, clothes, and a little tea, sugar, or treacle, and there was only five shillings left for food for eight mouths. They must eat three times a day, which made twenty-four meals to be got out of eightpence, only a *third* of a penny for each."

Thus, it appears that, in the progress of modern civilisation, so beneficial in a material sense to the bulk of the community, the agricultural labourer has been a constant loser. From a condition in which he might hope by industry and thrift to become a small farmer, he can now hope for nothing better than to perform like a hireling his day, and then to find a pauper's grave. One privilege after another has gone, until at last he is driven from the land the toil of his ancestors has made fertile for generations, to burrow with his family like rabbits in the outlying slums of some open village, and thence to trudge, with gaunt face and discontented heart, to and fro from the scene of labour, no longer sweetened by bygone memories or future hopes. There are times when the yearnings of humanity claim to be heard, and then those who, from any motive, good or bad, have allowed themselves to be led away by the tendency of the times, will be forced to exclaim, with the Earl of Leicester, "It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's country. I look around, and not a house is to be seen but mine. I am the Giant of Giant Castle, and have eaten up all my neighbours."

And now that the evil is pointed out, and there is no longer any legislative temptation to cottage destruction, it is to be hoped that landlords will follow the example set by many of our noblemen, and make an earnest effort to increase the number, and improve the quality, of cottages on their estates. The report of 1868 speaks of what the Earl of Leicester is doing, and that of 1864 refers to the estates of the Dukes of Bedford, Rutland, and Newcastle, as examples where a wise and liberal system has become traditional.

But although in such favoured spots man and nature rejoices, throughout the land pauperism grows apace. The increase of paupers in the year 1868 over the number in 1867 was 54,619, and in the year 1869 the increase over the year 1868 was 36,963. The number of paupers chargeable to the poor-rates on the 1st January, 1870, was 1,083,532, while their cost to the country amounted during the year 1869 to nearly seven million seven hundred thousand pounds sterling.

"If, then," to quote Sir George Grey, "one million have already so fallen out of the vast mass of sufferers, how many millions must they indicate as circling hopelessly on, in hunger, cold, and wretchedness, to the same sad fate, which is hardly worse than every step of the dread path which leads to it? Would it be an exaggeration to say, that only one in three out of the melancholy souls circling on to pauperism has yet sunk into the abyss? I think not; and then, if not, more than one in every seven of the entire population is pacing on in hopeless suffering to this sad end."

Classic mythology, mediæval romance, and ancient fairy tale, have their legends of direful dragons consuming whole villages and wasting fertile lands, tes-

tifying to the fact that the earth has ever been the prey of oppressors. But the story always ends with the advent of a deliverer. The figure of a Hercules, or a St. George, shines out from the dark background. The appeal to

"Him, who counts a nation's tears,
With whom are the oppressor and opprest,
And vengeance and the recompensing years,"

has never been in vain.

When our social reformer comes, and come he surely will ere long, a noble praise awaits him. Of the warrior, it is said, "he hath slain his thousands," but of the heroic statesman who shall face and solve this question, it will be said "he hath rescued his tens of thousands." All we can do is to prepare the way, by arousing in the minds of those who know something of the joys of a Christian home, a sense of the deprivation endured by thousands of families throughout our land, to whom its realisation is an impossibility.

By the aid of these reports, and other trustworthy sources, we shall show that in almost every county in England there are abodes in which even the decencies of home life cannot be maintained, much less its blessings enjoyed. Such an inquiry cannot fail to do good, if we pursue it in the spirit of the gentle singer who writes—

"Oh! lead me oftentimes to huts
Where poor men lie, that I may learn the stuff
Which life is made of, its true joys and griefs,
What things are daily bringing grief or joy
Unto the hearts of millions of my race."

A Husband's Love.

The touching incident recorded in this sonnet recently occurred within the knowledge of my friend and neighbour, the Rev. J. M. Williams, Rector of Burnby, who communicated it to me. The young wife of a barrister, in the extremity of weakness, was only saved from death by the "transfusion" of her husband's blood into her veins. He fainted twice, but she recovered. Instances of recovery by this extreme remedy are not unknown in medical annals, but this incident, with its peculiar attendant circumstances, is worthy of record.

LOWER and lower he beholds her sink
In mortal weakness, till life's dragging wheels
Refuse to move; and in despair he feels
Her all but lost—on danger's utmost brink.
From love's forlornest hope he does not shrink;
Out of his own warm veins the blood he steals,
Pouring it into hers, while his brain reels:
"Twixt wife and husband, oh, how dear a link!
He gave his blood, and saved his darling wife;
Great was the love, the self-devotion rare;
Dim shadow of *His* love beyond compare,
Who not for *friends* poured forth the purple life,
But *enemies*, and made of them His Bride,
To walk in white for ever at His side!

RICHARD WILTON, M.A.

BENEFIT-CLUB SPLENDOURS.

At certain seasons of the year, notably at Whitsuntide, and in the holiday month of August, are to be seen grand and gorgeous processions of various "benefit clubs" and "mutual aid societies." The spectacles they present, though differing considerably in detail, have a general resemblance sufficiently striking, so much so that it is impossible to mistake them for anything save what they are. They all

abound in flags, and banners, and trophies, and insignia of various kinds, and generally on a gigantic scale. They are characterised, too, by startling varieties of costume, presumably indicating the degrees of dignity attaching to the several functionaries and officials whom one sees flitting about hither and thither among the motley assemblage—the Grands, the Vice-Grands, the Deputy Grands, and the Vice-Deputy Grands, and so on. Such costumes consist of scarves, sashes, azure-coloured aprons, mantles, and other articles of silk or satin, emblazoned with gold and silver, and not seldom contrasting elegantly with the unwashed hands and unshaven face of the wearer, his muddy high-lows, and lime-bespattered fustian jacket. Then, as the monster flags are waved aloft, and banners which it takes half-a-dozen strong men to unpear are unfurled, bang go the big drums, blare go the trumpets, the cornets and clarions swell the deafening din; and amid the shouts of the rabble, and the squalling of the exultant small fry streaming and screaming at its heels, and the barking of the street curs, away goes the procession on its route to nowhere in particular.

Now, we ask, in the name of common sense, what, upon the face of it, does all this mean? Could any man with his wits about him, and who was previously ignorant of the facts, ever imagine that all this luxuriously expensive show, which is a mere barbarous display, devoid of the slightest element of utility, was got up for no conceivable object beyond that of strutting, four or five thousand strong, for a brief hour or two in the streets—that it could be paid for out of funds subscribed for the purpose of alleviating distress, and could be maintained from year to year, to the serious detriment of those funds, and the aggravated distress of those who should profit by them? Yet such are the facts; or if the fact is virtually different we should like to be informed where the difference lies. What imaginable connection, we may be allowed to ask, is there between Jack Jones and Dick Styles staggering along the street, yoked with three or four others to a banner which, as the wind catches it, threatens to lift them off the ground and fly away with them, and Jack Jones's wife lying sick of the fever at home, and Dick Styles's mother stretched stark and stiff and waiting to be buried? By what logic is the big drum, the brass band, and all that obstreperous bang and clang, connected with the claims of the sick room and the starving family? What, in a word, is the *raison d'être* of all this costly mummary and flummery? How came it to pass that our popular institutions of benevolence are made the mediums of senseless extravagance and waste? We shall endeavour to furnish materials for answers to these questions by some reference to facts.

Fact the first is, that the hard-working man is, as a rule, a bad financier and economist. His education for the most part has been defective, and either he has "no head for figures," as he is given to express it, or, if he has any talent that way, it is a latent talent, and has never been cultivated to any useful purpose. In consequence, he has to confide the management of the accounts of the society of which he is a member to others who are, or imagine they are, capable of managing them. It will happen that the business falls into incompetent hands, or into those of dishonest and interested persons, or into the hands of sheer rogues and scamps, whose sole object will be to divert as much as possible of

the cash they finger into their own pockets. Fact the second is, that the hard-working man is fond of beer, by which we mean to declare nothing more than that malt liquor is his favourite beverage, and that he is apt to indulge freely in it on what he considers to be fitting occasions. That he is, further, fond of demonstrations of a vociferous kind, especially at holiday times, may also be assumed without doing him any injustice. Fact the third, which is but a rider to fact the second, shows us the publican as the peculiar patron of the benefit club, and the identification of the publican's interests with the entire life and action of the club as long as it exists. Let us, in illustration of these facts, assist at the birth of a benefit club, and, tracing out the history of its rise and progress, see what becomes of it. The record will not be tedious, while it may be regarded as typical, and as embodying the true and faithful biography of many a philanthropic association full for a time of what seemed vigorous life, yet now numbered with the dead.

Mr. Flaggon, a wide-awake man of the world, of about fifty, concerning whose antecedents we need not trouble ourselves further than to remark, that he was a publican by profession—made his appearance about ten years ago at Bolter's Rents, a fast-increasing suburb in the east of London, growing daily more and more populous with a class always interesting to publicans—the class, to wit, which lives habitually from hand to mouth. Flaggon bought the two end houses of Paradise Row and Eden Gardens, which adjoined each other, and, knocking them into one, converted the unpretending tenements into a substantial public, gaudy with brass, plate-glass, and a flaunting sign by day, and flaming like a meteor by night. The sign was "The Jolly Bacchanals," and displayed a group of rather fiery-faced toppers, sitting round a table in the height of mirth and good fellowship. Beneath the sign was a monster lamp in bronze fittings, which projected far into the road, and, glaring like a full moon, sent its rays far down Paradise Row on the one hand and Eden Gardens on the other, and illuminating the pathways to the haven of rest. But although the attractions of the house were so decided, and though Polly Flaggon, the landlord's eldest daughter, displayed her smiling face and waved her long raven ringlets behind the bar from morn to night, the new house somehow failed to "draw," and for a weary time the bacchanals who figured on the signboard were almost the only company it could boast. Sometimes a stranger would drop in to smoke a solitary pipe over a solitary pot, and then walk out again; or a couple of slatternly women would, in a manner, cast anchor at the bar, and discuss their sorrows and their goes of gin in the hearing of the unsympathising Polly.

This sort of thing would not do for Mr. Flaggon; he had reckoned on a consummation of a clean different kind altogether: he had conceived the idea that "The Jolly Bacchanals" ought to "do" from fifty to sixty pounds a week, and here, after all the trouble and outlay he had been at, it was hardly doing as many shillings. Something must be done, and that pretty quickly, to prevent the place from going to the dogs. Among the very few customers who occasionally "used" the house was a rather seedy-looking subject of the name of Slapper, who never came in by day, but was fond of sipping his brandy-and-water of an evening behind the green

curtain within the bar, where he sometimes remained in seeming reverie to a late hour. A keen-witted, sharp, observant fellow, who had his own purposes to serve, he could hardly fail of recognising the position of the landlord, and of rightly interpreting the anxious expression of his countenance. Watching his opportunity, he hazarded a remark on the capabilities of "The Jolly Bacchanals," suggesting, as if in a casual way, how easy it would be, by the use of means which he could point out, to realise them. Flaggon, catching at the suggestion, responded in a manner to draw him out, and ere long the two were closeted together upstairs, debating and devising over a social glass the measures by which "The Jolly Bacchanals" was to be rescued from the neglect and seclusion in which it seemed to be settling down, and wafted on the wings of benevolence and universal brotherhood to the pinnacle of popular reputation and financial success.

The proposed remedy was, as the reader will have anticipated, the establishment of a new benefit society, under the auspices of the house—every member of which society would of necessity become a customer to the tap whenever the periodical meetings called them together. We need not go into the details of the business, as Slapper, who evidently had them all at his fingers' ends, unfolded them one after another. Suffice to say, that after one or two conferences, and the overcoming of a slight difficulty—which had for a time cast Mr. Slapper under a cloud, and which was smoothed away by a seasonable advance of cash on the part of Flaggon—the plan was finally matured, and its execution resolved upon. In a comparatively short time the results became apparent—circulars and prospectuses, and copies of proposed rules of "The Bolters' United Brethren Mutual Assurance Club," were distributed broadcast in the neighbourhood, and thrust into the hands of every working man and working man's wife throughout the district. When this intelligence had had time to make an impression, Mr. Slapper called a meeting in the big room of "The Jolly Bacchanals" to concert preliminary measures, to elect officers, and to discuss the necessary arrangements; at which meeting, the rumour ran, those invited would be considered as guests, and not be called on to pay. It may have been in part owing to this rumour that the room was crowded to overflowing—though whether the rumour proved correct or not does not definitely appear. The deliberations at this meeting were inaugurated by a flourish of martial music from a brass band stationed in the street below, and during the performance of the inspiring strain a noble new flag was unfurled from the battlements above, displaying in colossal characters of crimson, upon a violet ground, the words, "Bolters' United Brethren."

From that evening might be dated the establishment of the club. Slapper had everything prepared, and Slapper did everything. He modestly appointed himself secretary, and Mr. Flaggon treasurer; he proposed the various functionaries who were to operate under him, and he carried their election. He sent out commission agents in all directions to trumpet the superior claims of the society, and to enrol new members. He organised committees to meet at stated intervals, and he initiated them in their duties. Under their sanction he settled the rules, the rates of payment, the fines, and the nature of the benefits derivable to the members. He did not think it necessary to seek legislative sanction for the new-

born institution, or deem it worth his while to trouble Mr. Tidd Pratt for advice. Being quite equal to the occasion, he accepted all responsibility—or rather he contrived to shift it to the shoulders of the committee, whom he could mould to his will. He was liberal in the appointment of officers, and not less so in his outlay upon the indispensable properties—the banners, flags, costumes, and other processional paraphernalia, which being supplied by the acting members of the committee, tended to secure him their voices when any small matter in which he might feel personally interested should be put to the vote.

As the United Brethren offered unprecedented advantages to members, the reputation of the society spread, and the number of its adherents rapidly increased. The payment of a trifle of some sixpence a month guaranteed fifteen shillings a week in case of sickness, and deposits equally modest secured other advantages in an equally liberal ratio. The thirsty toilers of the Rents blessed the advent among them of such a benefactor as Mr. Slapper had proved, and it is not to be wondered at if a large proportion of them, when they came to "The Jolly Bacchanals" to pay their periodical sixpences, remained to drink success to the institution, and to reward their prudential investment by liquidating twice or thrice its amount in the foaming beverage, for which the house was now becoming famous. For "The Jolly Bacchanals" no longer languished in the cold shade of neglect—Mr. Flaggon had more than realised his original anticipations—a strong and steady trade had set in, and had inaugurated a decidedly prosperous state of things, which he, from his past experience, was perfectly well qualified to maintain. The United Brethren had floated him well over the flats and shallows which had threatened his early shipwreck, and had restored his peace of mind.

For a year or two the society continued to increase in numbers, and so long as it increased it continued, outwardly at least, to prosper. But its apparent prosperity was the merest delusion, and no man knew that better than Slapper did. When, in the fifth year of the society's existence, employment in the neighbourhood of Bolter's Rents began to fall off, and want of work was followed by want of necessities, and a ravaging epidemic came at the heels of poverty—the number of the sick and dead who were thrown in rapid succession on the funds, fairly swamped the concern in less than a month. There was no reserve to fall back upon, because the club, like the mass of its members, had lived hitherto from hand to mouth, and had wasted its means in the purchase of properties, in expensive demonstrations and senseless festivities. Mr. Slapper, who, of course, saw what was coming, prudently prepared for the shock by a timely migration: to what part of the world he directed his flight no man knew, and few took the trouble of inquiring. The committee met for a farewell pipe and pot, and passed a resolution dissolving themselves; and it is supposed that such of the minor functionaries as had the means of so doing, paid their arrears of salary out of moneys in their hands; nothing certain, however, is known on this point, it not having been possible to audit the accounts of the U. B. in consequence of the disappearance of the books along with Mr. Slapper.

Thus the "Bolters' United Brethren Mutual Assurance Club" faded away out of existence, and that with far less noise and clamour than had been found necessary to usher it into the world. It may be said, how-

ever, that if its demise was not signalled by sounding music and flaunting flags, there was, at any rate,



sighing, and sorrowing, and lamentation enough among the families of the victims to make it memorable. As for Mr. Flaggon, he showed his sympathy with the sufferers by the vehement abuse which he launched on the head of "that scoundrel Slapper:" it never occurred to him to acknowledge to his friends and neighbours that, in point of fact, the "Bolters' United Brethren" had fulfilled to perfection the sole purpose for which it came into being—that, namely, of compelling thirsty souls to the embrace of "The Jolly Bacchanals."

Now what is the moral suggested by this o'er-true picture? What should it be but this,—that working men should use every caution in delegating to others the conduct of their affairs? A reasonable regard to prudence would lead them to sever at once and for ever all connection between the public-house and the benefit club, and to abolish the incongruous and mischievous union of benevolence with tippling. It would also lead them to the rejection of all their flaunting properties and rowdy demonstrations, which cost so much, and only result in a social nuisance at best. Why should a multitude of working men, who have banded together to help one another, go marching vaingloriously through the

streets to the sound of drum and trumpet and cymbal clang, as though they had achieved some wonderful exploit, and merited the thanks of the nation? Why should they stultify themselves so emphatically, and call so loudly upon others to come and see what inconsiderate boobies they are? The only reason is, probably, the wire-pullers in the background, who profit by these absurd extravagances, have the game in their hands, and can, and do, lead the club members as they like. If it be urged that these demonstrations are not so costly but that many societies making them continue to exist and prosper, we reply that that is no excuse for their continuance: the money they cost is worse than wasted, inasmuch as it, almost invariably, by being so spent, facilitates and stimulates intemperance. It were far better thrown away than squandered as it is. If a society is rich, and can afford to spend, let the superfluous cash be applied in augmenting the allowances of the sick and bereaved members.

Our artist has cleverly hit off some of the humour of the Foresters' Fête, of which the following notice appeared in the "Times," after their August fête last year at the Crystal Palace:—

"The Foresters' Fête, as seen in the gardens, when some 60,000 or 70,000 people are all harmlessly and thoroughly enjoying themselves, is a great sight not only worth seeing but worth coming far to see, as a kind of impromptu festival among a people least given to such displays. But it must be owned that the procession is not worth seeing. The elements of processional grandeur among the Foresters are few and very small. A few in the green velvet doublet and plumes and yellow jack-boots which, according to tradition, formed the every-day costume of Robin Hood, headed the line. Some carried long-bows, and were painted, but, in spite of all ocular evidence to the contrary, these unfortunates were perfectly harmless and fit to be at large. After these, or sometimes mixed with them, were members of the order reasonably attired, and only wearing their sashes and badges. The rear was brought up by any who chose to join the line, which was very much cheered and very much laughed at as it passed along the grounds. The sooner the Foresters keep the harmless idiots in costume out of their annual celebrations the better will it be for the belief of the public in the general sanity of their association."

